

ASSAULT ON SANTA'S WORKSHOP



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Treason's Greetings



NEMIES ARE AT THE GATES OF SANTA'S WORKSHOP, and a betrayal from within puts every child's Christmas at risk.

COMPLEXITY RATING: 1

The Pitch

Christmas is a centuries-old tradition of celebrating the winter solstice, where families come together to celebrate and watch their children open gifts. But who gave the gifts, you may ask? Well, Santa Claus himself, of course. Riding the skies, racing against the night, using tremendous arcane powers to deliver gift to millions of children... until this year.

Far in the north pole, in the most remote toy workshop, treason has occurred. With the evil Krampus pulling the strings, dark elves have betrayed Santa with the goal of ending Christmas and ushering in a forever winter. Something has to be done. Someone must save Christmas.

Tone & Feel

Funny anachronisms, Heroism, Lighthearted, Looming evil, Snowy, Whimsical

Themes

Christmas tales, Conspiracy, Folklore, Making the children happy, Mythologies

Touchstones

The Night Before Christmas, Die Hard, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Violent Night, Assault on Precinct 13



* SANTA



Overview

Santa Claus, Krampus, and Christmas

* DRULYN COALHARDT

THIS FRAME ASSUMES A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF Santa Claus and American Christmas traditions. If you are unfamiliar, information is readily available online!

Parts of the Santa Claus myth included here are: the List (and checking it twice), the North Pole, Mrs. Claus, Santa's sleigh, his sack of toys, and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. This adventure does not deal with the relationship between Christmas and Christianity, instead reimagining Christmas traditions as secular winter holidays that can be placed in any fantasy world.

Krampus is a figure from European folklore. While his origins are unclear, he was for a time paired with Saint Nicholas—Santa Claus—as an equal opposite. Nicholas would reward good children and Krampus would bring coal to naughty children. In modern times, Krampus has become a more horrific figure who physically punishes those he deems naughty.

In this adventure, Krampus is depicted as an evil figure with pockets of worship across the land. Krampus is treated more as a demigod rather than a literal being. Cults of Krampus believe that goodness must be enforced, and those who misbehave must be punished and threatened into becoming good people. They recognize that this is an evil act; they see themselves as martyrs willing to damn themselves to protect others. Traditionally, this enforcement comes in the form of identifying naughty children and stealing anything good they own (such as Christmas presents) and replacing it with coal. The cults have become a sort of bogeyman that parents use to scare children into behaving—but they are very real.

Importantly, the cult does not physically assault children. While this has been a feature in some historical depictions of Krampus, it has no place in this adventure.



A toy for every child

REGARDLESS OF ORIGINS, CULTURE, LOCATION IN the world, from the smallest tree-perched hamlet, throughout the endless prairies of roving nomads, to the undergrounds of mining realms, Santa delivers a gift to every single child in the world. More than a nice gesture, it is a calling, a mission of love and affection. Why it started in the first place, no one knows. What everybody knows is life would be that much harder without this yearly warm breath of joy.

Delivering a toy to every child is not an easy task. Numerous scholars famously established how unfeasible such delivery actually is, if only considering at what speed the sleigh would have to be traveling. But it does happen, so how does Santa manages do pull it off every year? In a nutshell: good planning, workshops everywhere in the world, and a lot of ancient magic! The delivery itself is not that long (it has to fit within a single night) but it requires good equipment, experience and preparation.

Which all means that if you were to disrupt this operation, you would probably have to work hard to disorganize the elven workers of the north pole, sabotage Santa Claus' sleigh, take control of the workshops and eventually neutralize Santa Claus himself... but who would ever do that, hmm?

Dierbin

Dierbin is a small town that can be placed anywhere in your game world where temperatures are typically below freezing. It is remote, but not troublingly so—a week or so by cart from a larger town on a main trade route. When the characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

This picturesque town radiates such welcoming and cheer that it seems to cut through the biting cold. Most buildings are constructed from logs, some with stone foundations. Each structure is perfectly topped with a cap of snow, and thin streams of smoke spiral from every building's perfectly kept chimney. Small lanterns dot the town, bathing it in a cheerful yellow light that reflects on the snow, giving the entire town a gentle glitter. Rosy-faced people walk the streets, happily bustling between shops and taverns.

Just to the north of Dierbin is a planar gate that leads to the North Pole, a demiplane where Santa Claus resides (or did until being deposed!). All of the residents of Dierbin are aware of this fact and serve as guardians for the North Pole. They are not violent to strangers; they defend the gate and do not speak of it unless they truly believe a person deserves entrance. Naughty people have no business in the North Pole, after all.

The North Pole

The North Pole is a small area: a valley surrounded by hills and trees that contains the main toy workshop where the children's toys are made and the stables for the flying reindeers and the legendary Santa Claus' sleigh! Anyone who attempts to leave the valley by any means other than the planar gate is magically transported back to the central pole.

In general, It looks, smells and feels exactly like a child would dream it would be. The few buildings and infrastructure in here looks cute, woody, perfectly covered with pillows of fresh snow, with warm light coming from inside the buildings. It is absolutely cute and welcoming, maybe even to an unsettling degree.

Naughty people may absolutely enter the North Pole just like Nice people would, but where Nice people feel like they could stay in here forever and live a beautiful and quiet life in the warmth of hearth, Naughty people will feel a constant pinch of dread, tugging at their heart, telling them to walk away in shame. It's not hard to resist it, and anyone can pretend that nothing weird is happening, but this place has a way of bringing it out of you.

Communities



SAVIORS OF THE CHILDREN, THEY MAY COME FROM any origin, any place. It's the thing with children: each community has them, cherish them, protect them. No one can afford to ignore the issue of a fading Christmas. The rumors of dark intents looming over the North Pole sometimes pop up and travel through societies. One, in particular, has heard the calling louder than most.

Orderborne

Being a member of an Orderborne community, you know that saving Christmas is definitely your calling. When creating your character and picking the Orderborne community, one of your three values must be about protecting, cherishing or helping children. This is why, among all your people, you were the one to step forward.

Ancestries

Clank and Elves

Clank people might very well be former Santa workshop creations that have outlived their time as a toy and grew up to become independent. Elves may come from many regions but are also often employed at the North Pole workshop, historically. So feel free to be an ex-Santa employee.

In both case, due to your character not being present in a workshop when Krampus cultists started to infiltrate, they have been spared from being charmed and corrupted.

Player Principles

This is Christmas, keep it clean... more or less.

You're going to tell the stories of wonderful heroes, going in adventures, surviving dangers, taking risks... okay, but this is also supposed to pretty much be a family friendly story. Remember that you fight for children, for happiness in the world, so maybe keep your bloodthirsty impulses in check.

Take the time to explore your Lines and Veils together as group of players. Refer to pages 169 to 171 of the Daggerheart Core Rulebook for more details on story tone and safety.

Nobody needs to die

Just because Christmas is in danger doesn't mean people have to die for it. Krampus himself only wants to torment people, not have them killed. Nobody suffers when they're dead. Most of the enemies of the cause to save Christmas have either been convinced or charmed into helping Krampus achieves his goals, almost no one is here on their own ambition and volition. So be sparing and gentle with your enemies. They are people just like you.

Also, remember that killing puts you on the Naughty list. Big time.

You don't need to save the world, you just have to make Christmas happen

The situation at times might feel out of your grasp, out of control, but all you have to do is make Christmas happen. It is a yearly event, and you only need to keep the tradition going. You have a whole year to fix any other secondary problem that stands in your way. There are problems and personal issues you might find you want to fix or settle, but you'll have to choose between that and saving Christmas for the whole world. Tough but necessary choices.

GM Principles

Nobody needs to die...?

Due to how the Death Moves mechanic works and how the rules of the game constantly push players into making heroic choices with their characters' stories, it is likely that your player characters decide to sacrifice for the good cause. It is their choice.

But you should also demonstrate how Krampus is not about killing anyone, as his goal is despair and suffering. Keeping his enemies alive to rub defeat in their faces is the best outcome for him and his followers. Play on that note, both to motivate players to fight another day to seek revenge, and to spare the player characters, giving them a bit more "screen time" in the story.

Once you have established that Krampus prefers keeping people alive, when the characters are about to definitely beat Krampus and save Christmas, you can then make a whole show about Krampus taking the gloves off and going for the kill. It will resonate twice as loud.

It's a whole conspiracy

Krampus has prepared this takeover for years. It is more than fair to make it feel much bigger than it looks from the outside. Never hesitate to show the characters that Krampus cultists and followers were a few steps ahead. Even Santa Claus himself was duped. You can even lean into spy stories tropes if need be.

But importantly, Krampus needed that much time because he only has a limited impact on the world. The end result is a well-organized coup, but the player characters must, and will, dismantle all of those efforts in record time. Just because Krampus had time to prepare everything doesn't mean the plan was infallible. He relies on a lot of minions, some of them unthinking automatons and others are Santa's helpers who have been brainwashed. Finding weak points in the plan makes the quest doable, but there should be a lot to do. Your players should be feeling that they have to stretch thin to win against Krampus' minions.

Play on the anachronism, play on the tropes

Christmas is not a fantasy tradition, it is a very real one. It is already out of place to have a Christian celebration be part of a world where Jesus Christ is unlikely to ever been mentioned. Most of the traditions and the mythology around Christmas will be shoehorned into this fantasy world anyway, so lean into it!

Find justifications for all these Christmas-specific items and characters, embrace the anachronism and the quirky side of it all, and don't hesitate to make quick real life references. Anything to bring up a little smile on your players face. It's all a bit absurd and surrealist at its core, it's alright to relax and really own it.

Distinctions

Why Christmas after all?

Christmas is already a multi-century-old tradition. It has religious and liturgical roots, but it spread around the world after being adopted across a wide range of cultures. It became so important that, at some point, some of the most powerful wizards of the world started building an arcane solution to automate and ease the work of delivering gifts, which in turns made it possible at all to deliver for every children in the world in one single night.

Since the arcane works were designed to be self-sufficient, and since it was built a long time ago, the North Pole and the Christmas gift delivery have been kept as is for a while, to a point where no one really knows how it works, and likely wouldn't be able to fix any of it nowadays, should it break or be broken. It is never a concern, usually, but these years Santa isn't so sure.

Slowly but surely, people slowly forget what Christmas is really about. People forget it is more than just a short night with the family, receiving magical gifts and waiting for the next year to start again. Christmas is a life lesson. But Christmas happens so consistently and automatically that people have been taking this sweet little thing for granted, which is weakening the importance of the event, making people forget about it, which all means that Santa Claus can only count on less and less support, years after years. All this has obviously made Krampus plan that much easier to execute.

To rekindle the spirit of Christmas

More than saving Santa Claus, it's all about saving the next Christmas, and even more than that: it's about reminding people all around the world that Christmas is teaching us to be better people all year long, not just for one night. To be generous, caring, sharing, to be welcoming and warm.

It would already feel great to make Christmas happen, but no one is being fooled here. What Krampus managed to pull off, he can do again. No one but a handful of heroes showed up to save Christmas, if that's any indication of the state of the world. Even after the players characters spoil Krampus plans, there would be still a lot of work to do to bring back the fundamental message of the spirit of Christmas to the general population of the world.

And that is a much harder mission to tackle.

Farther and beyond

The world is vast and full of surprises. This is your opportunity to depict a world where various Communities and cultures have practiced the Christmas tradition but have forgotten its true meaning with time. In real life, many countries have many different traditions surrounding the winter solstice, and it would be a great source of inspiration for handling the world-building alongside your players.

To be able to follow population shifts and have gifts for many new kids being born, the North Pole had to expand and work with other workshop all around the world, if only to fabricate toys that are closer to what children in those other realms are used to. There are a dozen of workshops, spread throughout various nations, that fabricate toys for Santa Claus.

The problem is, now that many workshops exist outside of the well-defended North Pole demiplane, those workshops are easy targets if someone wants to disrupt toy production. Krampus will not hesitate to try and send minions there as well to take control of the workshops and prepare cursed toys. Some of those workshops are not yet targeted, some of them have already fallen under Krampus's control, and some are in need of help right now! As many opportunities to further the story.

Other notable characters

Mrs. Claus

Santa's longtime partner, Mrs. Claus left his side in recent years. Suffering from being relegated to a mere second and feeling a distance growing between them, she decided to go it alone. She has the same goals as all the other Santas: she desires to teach children to be nice with the hopes that they carry that attitude into their adult life. But she doesn't have the support of a multi-century old legendary arcane demiplane to base her operation off of, so the progress has been slow. Instead, she has a hamlet with a school in it for lost children and orphans.

She does try her best to make a dent in the world, pushing against apathy, cruelty, and wrongdoing in her own community. Despite having done wonderfully on her own, considering what she has, Mrs. Claus will likely forever be too proud to recognize she could have achieved her goals much sooner if only she had stayed in the North Pole or accepted the support of Santa Claus.

Belsnickel

A mysterious person whose identity was surprisingly lost to time. People of Dierbin claim to remember that Belsnickel used to work in the North Pole a long time ago. They occasionally appear around Christmas time to haunt naughty children. They are assumed to work for Krampus, but their actual motivation is unclear.

An elusive character, they generally appear in the early of the night, wearing a number of ample layers of furs and dark clothing, armed with spiny and thorny weapons made of tree branches. The rumor mentions Belsnickel approaching groups of children that are still out at night, giving them sweets and snacks, enrapturing them with their branches, instilling excitement and chaos in their minds, making them too active for bedtime when they do make their way home to their parents.

Hans Trapp

A grim character who used to live in Dierbin, Hans Trapp was eventually banished from the town to never return. Despite previously being pardoned by Santa Clause for some minor wrongdoings, he holds a grudge him and Dierbin in general. He is a grumpy giant, bitter about having been excommunicated, roaming

the world in search of all of the dirty work townsfolk are ashamed to offer. He has messy hair, thick unkempt beard, a dead gaze and a mean loud voice.

Not many Dierbin people will mention his name without showing sadness. This is because Hans used to be the guardian of Dierbin, pushing back intruders and assailants and scaring them so much that none of them ever came back. Although his results were undeniable, he wasn't just frightening his enemies, but also his fellow townspeople. Despite his justifications, apologies and cries, and despite Santa Claus support, the entire Dierbin population petitioned to have him removed from the community.

Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden

A legendary lady of Winter, born of snow and love. It is believed she is the secret daughter of Santa Claus, but not only has he never confirmed the rumor, but Mrs. Claus was also never seen bearing a child during her stay in the North Pole. She is known as a denizen of the wild, appearing on occasion during the winter solstice. People who have met her describe a stunningly beautiful lady with an enchanting singing voice, yet a heart of ice. Many declare their love for her, though she would return neither passion nor attention.

Some legends attribute her with protecting the wildlife during the winter season, to help them survive the harsh weather. Others say she appears and plays with children who build snowwomen, others say she comes to those who get lost in the snow, gives them a last kiss, before they are later found dead and frozen.

Père Fouettard, or "Father Flog"

A dark soul of a man, long known to Dierbin's people as one of Krampus's most dedicated servants. He has repeatedly tried to outrun Santa during the gift delivery so he could scare children right before they even had a chance to receive their present, just so Nice children would think they had actually been Naughty that year! He is a trickster, a cruel and powerful wizard, and a long-standing enemy of Santa Claus. He uses spells and curses to bring turmoil to the population and evade all attempts to be captured or neutralized. A dangerous foe that terrifies even the bravest defenders of Christmas.

Campaign Mechanics

The North Pole Demiplane Rules

THE NORTH POLE IS A MAGICAL DEMIPLANE WHERE regular rules do not apply. The most important rule is that death does not occur at the North Pole. Anyone who makes a Death move can choose to Avoid Death but this will only make them unconscious within the North Pole, but choosing Risk it all and failing, or just choosing Blaze of Glory, means that the character is eventually kicked out of the North Pole plane, arriving unconscious outside the gate near Dierbin, as if they had chosen to Avoid Death.

This also means that the North Pole is hospitable. While cold, the weather is never life-threatening, no matter how long a person stays in it. Creatures have no need to eat or drink for sustenance, but meals can be had for enjoyment.

Krampus tried to take control of Christmas to punish the Children, but if that plan fails, destroying Christmas altogether is not out of the question.

Nice or Naughty?

WHILE PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER, YOU MIGHT BE wondering from time to time, Am I on the nice or naughty list?" What Krampus wants is for people around the world to become naughtier, torment each other, and become more individualistic. That's the exact opposite of what Christmas tries to teach everyone.

Being Naughty is playing into Krampus's hand, while trying to be Nice is following the learning of the spirit of Christmas. Throughout the game, you might want to track if the player characters get to be on the Naughty list or the Nice list. For sure, saving Christmas in itself is a pretty good reason to be on the Nice list, as Santa Claus himself will gladly offer to the player characters, if only to give them a reason to help him. But things are not that simple. What really decides are your actions.

To get on the Nice list:

- * Hug or kiss someone who needs it
- * Heal a wounded, ease a pain
- * Give something or money to the poor
- * Convince other people to do the same and be nicer
- * Save Christmas

To get on the Naughty list:

- * Kill someone
- * Hurt someone who didn't need to hurt
- * Take something that someone else needed
- * Mistreat people, especially children
- * Refuse to help when you have nothing better to do

Now, how to keep track? Each player character sets aside one six-sided die. After you're done with the Assault on Santa's Workshop adventure (or after you're done spoiling the plans of the Krampus cultists in Dierbin any other way) turn all those dice on their 6 face. The 6 means that the player characters are on the Nice list. Anything below means you're on the Naughty list.

Whenever a player character does something Naughty, turn their die to 1. Whenever a player character does something Nice, if their die isn't already on 6, turn it one step up. It's easy to be on the Naughty list, but it takes a while to get back onto the Nice list.

Parting Gifts

IF THE PLAYER CHARACTER EVENTUALLY MANAGE TO save Christmas this year, they too need to get back to their families, or maybe even band together to celebrate Christmas as a group. At that moment, gifts will be distributed to all the people on the Nice list. Those on the Naughty list will receive a piece of coal cursed by Krampus, giving them nightmares for the next year!

If every player character manages to save Christmas AND to be on the Nice list when Christmas happens, Krampus is truly defeated, as the characters have proven that you can fight a war against such evil plans without having to resort to violence, misery or selfishness. A true happy ending and a new peaceful era to begin.

If the player characters end up on the Naughty list, they have saved Christmas still... but for how long? Krampus cackles in their mind, for he has proven that nothing can be done in this world without someone else paying the price. A bitter end.

Session Zero Questions

Ask any of these questions to your player characters, or make up your own:

- * When you think of Christmas, what memory does it bring?
- * Would you say you've been Nice or Naughty this last year? Why?
- * How is Christmas celebrated, if at all, where you come from?
- * Do you actually believe in the spirit of Christmas, and that what it teaches us is valuable?
- * Have you sent Santa Claus a letter? What did you wish for?

Inciting Incident: Assault on Santa's Workshop

Assault on Santa's Workshop is a Daggerheart™ Compatible adventure designed to ease you into this world. It is more than a simple Inciting incident, it's a complete One Shot. The adventure is designed for four to six level 1 (Tier 1) characters. It can be completed in a single 4- to 6-hour session, and the optional encounters could extend this to multiple sessions if desired.

It all begins with a call from Santa Claus himself, what seemed like a last resort letter, that each character (or, collectively as a group) received from Santa. These letters arrive regardless of where they are—after all, Santa knows! Read or paraphrase the following to your players:

Help!

Christmas is in danger! I've been thrown out of the North Pole and could use a little outside assistance to get back in before Christmas is ruined. I've heard of your exploits and can promise a place on the Nice list this year if you'll help me. Please, come to the town of Dierbin as quickly as possible—or all the world's children will be in for a disappointing holiday!

Much love,
Santa Claus

The elven cult of Krampus has infiltrated Santa's workshop, spreading lies and sabotaging equipment. With Christmas looming, the cultists have led a successful revolution and deposed Santa! But they didn't know one important fact: Santa is no pushover. He has a plan, and once he finds some help, he's coming back to stuff their stockings.

Adventure Background

FOR CENTURIES, SANTA HAS DELIVERED PRESENTS to all the good children of the world on Christmas Eve. Over that time, countless dark forces have attempted to steal or stop Christmas. Santa and the forces of good have fended off many incursions, so the latest coalition of evil has decided to try subterfuge.

A cult of Krampus has infiltrated the workforce of Santa's Workshop, after spending several years learning the Workshop's secrets and quietly spreading dissent. The cult believes that naughty children should be punished, and that Santa's tactic of simply giving them coal is insufficient. The cult intends to use Santa's magical items and status to gain access to all the world's naughty children, punishing them in the cruel ways of Krampus.

The cultists, led by an elf named Drulyn Coalhardt, have launched a propaganda engine among the Workshop elves and the surrounding areas of the North Pole. Through careful sabotage of the Workshop's automated systems and calculated deception, Drulyn has successfully made Santa seem outdated and inefficient. A coup was staged—assisted with powerful charm magic—and Santa was deposed, with Drulyn poised to take over his Christmas duties. Of course, Drulyn has no intentions of delivering anything but Krampus's "justice."

Now Santa finds himself adrift, caught in a situation he has never faced before. He's got unstoppable faith that he can save Christmas again—but this time he's going to need some help. That's why he has put out a call to the realm's most worthy heroes to bring back the joy of the season!

What Santa Knows

WHILE HEAVILY BASED ON AMERICAN MYTH, THIS is not entirely the familiar Santa Claus. This Santa is part of a fantasy world and has faced more than one battle. He is more adventure-ready, accustomed to battling those who would stop Christmas. Santa was once married to Mrs. Claus, but she left on her own adventures after decades of being second-fiddle. She is currently happily building her own myth of joy elsewhere, but the loss of her has demoralized Santa and made him nostalgic and regretful. He still believes in and carries the spirit of Christmas, but he's lived a life that he wishes he could do over.

Santa does not know that he was deposed by a cult. He believes he was outmaneuvered by an ambitious elf with evil designs for Christmas. He knows of Krampus as an evil force that punishes naughty children, and has heard rumblings that Krampus may be responsible for some children losing their Christmas presents.

Santa is missing his hat, gloves, and coat—the coat being especially important as it is the source of his Christmas magic and station. Without it, he's much more of a mortal man than the mythological Santa.



Running the Adventure

What You Need

This is not a stand-alone roleplaying game. To run *Assault on Santa's Workshop*, you need the Core Rulebook of Daggerheart for easier reference to rules, as well as polyhedral dice, either physical or digital, at least two twelve-sided dice and a whole seven dice set.

This adventure also includes a number of custom adversaries and magical items. Adversary stat blocks appear in appendix A, and magical items in appendix B. The maps included in this adventure are found in appendix C.

Adventure Synopsis

Christmas is in danger! Just before the annual holiday, Santa's Workshop has been infiltrated by a sinister cult and Santa himself has been deposed. Heroes are needed to undo the cultists' work, battle their way into the Workshop, and stop the cult before their true plan comes to fruition! This adventure is broken into three parts:

- * **Part One: Northward Bound.** Santa and the heroes meet up in Dierbin and decide to join forces.
- * **Part Two: Ho-Ho-Homecoming.** Santa leads the heroes back to his Workshop, where cultists hold power with corrupted automatons.
- * **Part Three: Kringle vs. Krampus.** A ritual is in place to take control of all the world's children, and the heroes have only one chance to save Christmas!

Adventure Hooks

The hook that brings the characters into this adventure is largely up to you. If you plan on completing *Assault on Santa's Workshop* in a single session, it is recommended that you pick the first hook. This allows you to get right into the adventure itself. If you expect to spend a few sessions exploring Dierbin, it is a good idea to let the characters explore the town before providing them with the hook for the main adventure.

- * The characters receive a message in the form of a letter from Santa, asking them to come to Dierbin to help.
- * The party arrives in Dierbin on its own, hearing it was renowned for holiday celebrations, and the characters are approached by Santa personally.
- * The group stumbles across a Krampus cultist during an unrelated quest, picking up a letter that leads them to believe something sinister is happening in Dierbin.

Part I: Northward Bound



AT THE START OF THIS QUEST, EACH CHARACTER (OR, collectively as a group) receives a letter from Santa requesting help. regardless of where they are—after These letters arrive all, Santa knows!

© Dean Spencer

This section of the adventure details the town of Dierbin, near the North Pole. It contains information on several notable locations and non-player characters in Dierbin as well as plot hooks. This is intended as optional side quest content: the party could spend several sessions exploring the town and getting to know its people, earning their trust before the townspeople let them approach Santa Claus. Some of these side quests could influence the circumstances of later parts of this adventure. For playing in a shorter game, characters can be brought directly to Santa Claus.

However, Dierbin has been quietly and successfully infiltrated by Krampus cultists. These cultists were responsible for the propaganda campaign that ultimately led to Santa being replaced with Drulyn Coalhardt. The townspeople still have a certain reverence for Santa and seek to protect him, but their respect is tempered by their growing feeling that it may be time for him to set aside his hat and retire. The townspeople, with some exceptions, believe that Drulyn is a worthy successor to Santa's Christmas legacy—but unless they are true initiates of the cult, they have no idea about any sinister machinations. Almost everyone in town knows where Santa is residing (Hermey's Home) and can impart the information to anyone they believe worthy of it—such as someone with a hand-written invitation from Santa.

YOU BETTER WATCH OUT

While in Dierbin, it should be assumed that the characters are being watched. Most citizens are simply taking a friendly interest, but hidden cultists are observing possible threats. At your discretion, the characters' actions in Dierbin may influence the rest of this adventure. For example, if they loudly brag about coming here to save Christmas, cultists may already be on alert when they arrive at the North Pole. If any character demonstrates strong magical aptitude, the cultists may have stronger anti-magical defenses in place. Think about what's reasonable and let your players guide this!



DIERBIN

- 1 The Infinite Spiral
- 2 The Stuffed Stocking
- 3 Mama Sugar's Sweetery
- 4 The Obelisk
- 5 Auroral Shrine
- 6 Hermey's Home



Places and People

The Infinite Spiral

Located in the center of Dierbin is the Infinite Spiral, a town's largest tavern and inn. Named after the spinning red-and-white striped post hung outside the door, the Infinite Spiral never closes. A massive fireplace heats the center of the main room and each guest room has its own stone fireplace. This is the largest hangout spot for the townspeople of Dierbin, and it's frequently packed in the evenings. The Infinite Spiral's signature drink is a glass of warm eggnog served with a spiral of cinnamon, whose warming bourbon base is a local favorite on cold nights.

People

- * **Frienda Blaskin** (she/her) is a hard working dwarf **commoner** whose family has owned the Infinite Spiral for generations. She is fit and muscular and keeps her form by assisting the logging crews around town; she loves the wilderness and trees and is considered a near-master in wood carving. She takes her responsibility as the de facto face of Dierbin seriously; most travelers encounter her first so she strives to leave a good impression. She gives away no hints regarding Dierben's secrets.
- * **Khalid al-Hassan** (he/they) is a joyful and bright elven musician (**commoner**) who plays the Infinite Spiral most nights. He spent several years exploring the world before returning home to stay. Their Christmas ballads are something most townspeople look forward to all year.
- * **Struges Ironson** is a spiteful dwarven Krampus **cultist** (see appendix A). A miner by family, he works now as staff at the Infinite Spiral. He tires of the secrecy around the North Pole, thinking the entire charade childish and wasteful. He is serious-minded and believes in hard labor; he thinks Krampus's methods would do the world some good. He resents working at the Infinite Spiral, but grins through his teeth to maintain the position as eyes and ears for the cult.
- * **Karenda "Aunt" Turner** (she/her), a warm and caring human **commoner**, wandered into Dierbin nearly twenty years ago and was so charmed that she never left. She is a generous person who

believes it to be her duty to give back to Dierbin all it has given to her. She is affectionately known by the townsfolk as Aunt Turner, almost a part of every family.

- * **Chandel Tai** (she/they) is a sturdy albino infernis **guard** who decorates her horns with crystals, giving her an almost ethereal appearance in the snow. While they have a tall and surprisingly lithe form, they are known to be Dierbin's strongest sword-arm and heartiest drinker. She defends the town—most often from natural threats like animals, but very occasionally from bandits or thieves—and takes great pride in doing so. They are excited to meet adventurers and share stories and techniques.



* KRAMPUS CULTIST

The Stuffed Stocking

As the largest store in town, the Stuffed Stocking carries all manner of general goods. Much of the stock is basic home and survival wares, but this is also the only place outside the North Pole that Santa's staff occasionally trades with. As such, sometimes minor magical items or artificed goods are available for discerning customers.

People

- * **Abdu Kebede** (he/him) is a good-hearted dwarven **veteran** who, in his youth, was an adventurer of no small acclaim. He was part of a group that saved Christmas from an arch-lich who threatened the entire world. Now aged out of adventuring, Abdu has retired to Dierbin and set up shop. Abdu is ferociously loyal to Santa, and is one of the few people in town who refuses to believe that Drulyn should be the one to take over Christmas. He is relatively open about his own tales regarding Christmas, but is always careful to never imply that the North Pole is nearby.
- * **Safiyeh Kebede** (she/her) a distrustful dwarf **commoner**, is Abdu's daughter and primary operator of the Stuffed Stocking. Safiyeh was raised on her father's tales of adventure and Santa but has a different interpretation: she thinks Santa has a cavalier attitude that invites disaster. She distrusts adventurers in general, and serves as a spy for Drulyn—though she is not a cultist and does not know the extent of their plans.

Mama Sugar's Sweetery

This shop sells all manner of sweets, treats, and baked goods. Starting before dawn, the scent of delicious food begins to fill the nearby streets. Founded by a druid, the Sweetery's concoctions are magical, capable of healing minor injuries (each one restores 1 Hit Point). However, the Sweetery also houses Dierbin's secret underbelly: a hidden fighting ring in a secret sub-basement. The fighting ring began as a contest of strength in the long winter months, and quickly became a great source of local entertainment. Many in the town have favorite fighters, and elaborate storylines have begun to emerge of rivalries between brawlers. Most would claim that the fighting ring is a secret so as to not scare off outsiders—but in truth, it's really just because people enjoy an illicit thrill.

People

- * **Mama Sugar** (she/her) is the caring human proprietor (**commoner**) of the Sweetery. While not the original Mama Sugar, she has well earned the title. Mama Sugar continues the original's druidic traditions and baking prowess, keeping Dierbin happy and fat.
- * **Wesley "Wes" Troyin** (he/him) is the secretly showy good drakona **thug** who runs the fighting ring beneath the Sweetery. By day he handles simple carpentry jobs around town, but by night he's an energetic and flamboyant announcer whose personality has made the fighting ring into something special. He does not have the sharpest mind for business, but knows how to put on a show.

Obelisk

By all appearances, Obelisk is a simple small-town blacksmith's shop. It specializes in farming and logging equipment as well as fireplace repair and maintenance. But secretly, Obelisk creates specialized equipment and repair parts for Santa's Workshop. While the Workshop is full of skilled craftspeople with magical machinery, it's specialized toward toys. When the elves need a magical part replaced or some difficult artificery completed, they often come to Obelisk for help.

People

- * **Azad Skalski** (he/him) is a humble elven **commoner** who presents himself as a simple blacksmith. In reality, Azad is a master artificer who can do it all. Uniquely, he was actually recruited to Dierbin—his skill attracted the attention of the North Pole, and Santa asked Azad personally to come and live nearby. Azad was flattered and came at once, but has lately grown tired of the mundane predictability of life in Dierbin. He had expected more excitement and to be more involved in the Workshop's day-to-day operations, but now spends more time creating new horseshoes than anything else. He has remained neutral and removed from the drama surrounding Santa.

Auroral Shrine

Dierbin is not large enough to truly warrant many places of worship, but people always seek a place to congregate in faith and comfort. The Auroral Shrine is a stone building with a glass ceiling designed to provide a good view of the auroras that dance through the northern air. It serves as a place of eclectic worship, not dedicated to any specific god, where people may pray in peace. The Shrine is technically never closed, but it is most active when the skies are dark and the auroras are most visible.

People

* **Anne Rohde** (she/her) is the pious and passionate halfling halfling **commoner** who maintains the Auroral Shrine. As its Keeper, she is paid a modest stipend by the town. Anne is a student of religion and takes joy in learning about the beliefs of the world; she considers herself polytheistic. She has become an amateur astronomer and has a small telescope array that she allows anyone to use in exchange for a small donation to the Shrine.

* **Jim "The Fish" Brook** (he/him) is a chill human **commoner**. He is employed as a handyman by Anne to assist with the upkeep of the Auroral Shrine which mostly consists of keeping the glass roof clear of snow and ice. During the days, Jim is almost always found at a small pond outside of town, ice fishing in a small hut—hence the nickname.

Hermey's Home

On the edge of town is Hermey's Home, a one-story log cabin. Here, Santa has taken up residence after being evicted from the North Pole. The home has an extensive stone basement, which has been given completely over to Santa. The first floor is half a very basic living space and half a rudimentary surgical practice. The basement has been decorated with reverence. Brilliant red and green fabrics line the walls and a plush carpet of animal furs line the floor.

People

* **Hermey** (he/they) is a a wise and open elven **commoner** who, unlike most of his kind, wanted to leave the North Pole. He was born there and worked many years in the Workshop, gaining great skill in magical craftsmanship—but found no joy in the work, instead preferring to study dentistry. Santa understood and gladly permitted Hermey to leave, and the two have remained close friends ever since. Hermey plies their trade happily for the townspeople and has been steadfast in their efforts to provide aid to Santa when he was in need.



Plot Hooks

Combat

- * **Icy Infestation.** Chandel Tai could use a hand with a strange “spider web” of ice that has appeared in the nearby forest. This is actually a large hive of ice elementals that have moved in, creating hazardous icy conditions.
- * **Tag-Team Throwdown.** The current tag team champions of the Sweetery are the Luman brothers, neutral dwarven **commoners**, and they have issued a challenge: none can best them! With betting at an all-time high, there's a sweet pot of 8-9 bags of gold on the line if any of the characters want to vie for the title. If they do, hidden cultists will certainly be analyzing their moves...
- * **Deadly Craft.** Azad Skalski has learned of a meteorite landing spot not far from town. The metal in the meteor is extraordinarily valuable and Azad wishes to work it into an enchanted item, but the landing zone is located within griffon territory. If the party can fend off the griffons and return with the meteorite remnants, Azad would excitedly craft it into an enchanted item.

Social

- * **The Eggnog Contest.** The Infinite Spiral is ready to host the annual eggnog drinking contest. Whoever can drink the most eggnog wins a place of honor during a feast, and is crowned Champion of the Spiral.
- * **Frienda's Friends.** Frienda Blaskin suspects that the new adventurers in town may be worthy of learning Dierbin's secrets, but first she needs to be sure that they have the generosity of spirit that she does. She tasks them with delivering three good gifts to three different people in town. She promises that if the people enjoy their gifts, she'll reveal something of significance to the characters' quest.
- * **Suspicious Sky.** Anne Rohde, in her role as Dierbin's spiritual advisor, is concerned that there may be external influences involved in Santa's fall from grace. She cannot prove it, but approaches the characters as newcomers to investigate Wes Troyin, Safiyeh

Kebede, and Khalid al-Hassan as potential spies or influencers. Anne does not want violence or threats; she merely thinks people may be misguided and wants to offer counsel and discussion. This is an opportunity to expose Safiyeh as a spy, and potentially to reveal her knowledge that Drulyn did not come to power unaided—or, if handled poorly, to drive her into becoming a full cultist.

Exploration

- * **Silent Night.** Khalid al-Hassan wants to make this year's ballad something special, and is working on adding a magical touch to his music. But he requires a rare ingredient to make his instrument function: a talon from a snowy polar bear that lives on a nearby mountain. If the party can retrieve one, he rewards them with a handful of gold per PC.
- * **A Memorial.** When Abdu Kebede saved Christmas many years ago, it came at a terrible price. One of his allies, a gnome named Ayene Tamru, fell in battle against the arch-lich they were fighting. Abdu travels to her gravesite every year, but he is getting old and requires assistance to make his way in the cold. Along the way, Abdu is happy to give details on the surrounding landscape and tell fantastical tales of his adventure with Santa Claus.
- * **A Daughter's Lie.** Safiyeh Kebede wants the party to leave town and to leave Drulyn alone. If given an opportunity, she pretends to be as pained as her father at the recent events, and offer a hint that she heard of a plot against Santa meeting at ancient standing stones a few miles outside town. This is a lie, designed to get the characters out of town and off a trail, but that doesn't mean the standing stones are uninhabited: a yeti has taken up residence there and ambushes any who approach.

Part II: Ho-Ho-Homecoming



AS THE CHARACTERS ARE LED THROUGH THE GATE to the North Pole, read or paraphrase the following:

Passing through the gate, you are immediately flooded with scents: cinnamon, mint, holly. A far cry from the blowing snow of Dierbin, the air in your lungs feels warm and welcoming. Before you is a massive building, its bright red paint and twinkling white lights standing proudly out from the mounds of snow and thick fir trees surrounding this small valley. Smoke billows from a wide chimney, and a large, elegant—almost regal!—stable offers shelter to the side. Snow falls around you, gentle but ever-present, though the sky is a vibrant cloudless blue. You feel as if you are inside a snow globe, so strongly, in fact, that you would not be surprised to see a giant hand appear and shake the landscape. In the direct center of the area stands a tall red-and-white striped pole. It is unmarked, but there is no mistaking it: you have arrived at the North Pole.





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WORKSHOP & STABLES

The Stables

8. Stables

As the characters enter the stables, read or paraphrase the following:

The stables are large, larger than would be necessary for any normal beasts of burden. The craftsmanship here is extraordinary: carvings of snowflakes, each unique, line massive wooden arches that support the broad roof. Heavy oil lamps create a warm and welcoming aura while strings of tinsel strung among the rafters give a kindly twinkle. But all is not well in the stables: the animal stalls, with their massive red-painted wooden doors, have been fitted with bars. What was once a spacious and happy place has become a prison.

The stable has nine stalls, each housing a reindeer. Each stall has a hand-carved name plate on the door: Dasher, Dancer, Donner, Blitzen, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, and Rudolph.

The reindeer did not react kindly to the cult's takeover of the North Pole, remaining loyal to Santa. By the cult's doctrine, disobedience brings punishment. Each reindeer is trapped in a cage, unable to fly freely. They are cared for and physically fit, but unhappy and restless.

Guarding the stables are as many charmed elves as PCs in the Party minus one. While not cultists themselves, they have fallen under the mind-altering effects of the cult and do the cult's bidding. If no other alarm has been raised, the elves are idly taking care of stable tasks: feeding, cleaning, etc. If the charmed elves see any characters or Santa, their primary goal is raising an alarm. Their secondary goal is keeping the reindeer imprisoned.

If the reindeer are freed, they are overjoyed to see Santa. After being imprisoned so long, their strongest desire is to fly—an act that would surely alert guards elsewhere. The reindeer can be calmed into staying grounded with a successful Presence Roll (14) with Hope, which can be made with Advantage if Santa is present to help. On a success with Fear, one reindeer might still make enough noise out of excitement.

Santa wants to protect his reindeer and attempts to get them through the planar gate back to the relative safety of Dierbin. The reindeer are loath to go, but obey Santa without question. If an adventurer pushes back, asking for the reindeer to stay, Santa points out that the animals are too large to be useful in a battle indoors, but he does allow Rudolph to stay within the North Pole as backup (see Part 3: Kringle vs. Krampus).

The Workshop

1. Living Room

The living room is the quintessential Christmas-themed room. This is where Santa relaxes after a hard night's deliveries. A warm fireplace creates a cozy atmosphere for the two large, over-stuffed armchairs nearby. Silver and gold tinsel sparkles over the deep green walls. One corner is dominated by an impeccable fir tree decorated with perfect glass ornaments. Near the eastern door is an imposing desk. A red-and-white-striped circular rug in the center of the room brings the place together.

The room, unlike much of the rest of the cult-dominated Workshop, is perfectly preserved. If questioned about this, Santa explains that the room—and much of the North Pole—is tied to the concept of Christmas itself. This room is the embodiment of the contentment at the end of a Christmas day and always returns to its intended state even if altered.

The desk is empty, a fact that alarms Santa. This desk is where he would compile and check his *List* (twice). The *List* is a powerful magical artifact and its disappearance is troubling, though not wholly unexpected.

Any character who succeeds on an Instinct Roll (13) notices that, while one armchair is obviously well-used, the other has a layer of dust over it. On a success with Hope, the character will figure someone important is missing, someone dear enough to Santa's heart that the armchair hasn't been touched in years.

2. Santa's Quarters

This was once a beautiful room, but is now in tatters. A large four-poster bed made of hand-carved wood takes up most of the room, but the wood is badly scarred and the sheets unmade. Most of the room is similarly damaged: the basic functionalities of a wardrobe and chest of drawers are intact, but virtually everything has been cosmetically defaced with no attempt made to clean up the destruction. The room is presently unoccupied, though clearly in use by someone who takes pleasure in occupying—and desecrating—a space that was once Santa's. Several things can be found with Instinct Rolls depending on the outcome:

- * **8 or lower: Failure.** The room is in too much chaos to figure anything out. You'd be here days trying to sort it out!
- * **9+: A portrait of a woman, tossed in the corner of the room.** The woman is young, smiling, and her beautiful, gray-tinged hair pulled up neatly into a bun. This is Mrs. Claus! On a roll with Fear, its frame is broken, and Santa is saddened to discover her portrait ruined.
- * **12+: A book stored near the bed, titled *The Word of Krampus*.** This is a sort of holy text or manifesto, clearly well-read. Its pages describe the basic tenets of the cult's worship of Krampus. This is an early indicator that the takeover of the Workshop was motivated by darker forces than Santa realized. On a roll with Fear, the character who finds and inspects the book marks a Stress for diving too deep into its disturbing content.
- * **16+ with Hope: Buried under a pile of dirty clothes is Santa's hat!**

3. Kitchen

This modest kitchen is highly magical, able to produce an incredible amount of food in a small amount of time and space. All the food for the Workshop's workers is produced here. While not as damaged as Santa's Quarters, the kitchen has clearly not been well-kept. Dirty dishes are piled up and stains cover most surfaces, though an undefeatable smell of cinnamon lingers in the air. One **charmed elf** is stationed here, cooking—they attempt to flee and raise an alarm if they notice the characters rather than fight such a lopsided battle.

4. Elves' Quarters

This long room is full of bunk beds and trunks, providing a living space for between 40–50 elves at once. Here, anything reminiscent of a traditional Christmas has been stripped away and replaced with pro-Krampus propaganda. The furniture is utilitarian and cold, the mattresses thin and uncomfortable. Posters spouting Krampus's ideology fill the walls: "A Good Person is A Punished Person!" "We Sacrifice For The Good of All!" "Santa Delivered WEAKNESS!" "KRAMPUS over KRINGLE!"

Five charmed elves, one Krampus cultist, and one overseer automaton are in this room. Add a Krampus cultist for a party of at least 5 player characters, add an overseer automaton for a party of 6. The overseers orders the charmed elves to fight and detain the party, but if all the overseer fall or the battle turns seriously against the elves, they attempt to flee into the Workshop Floor and raise an alarm.

* CHARMED ELF



5. Workshop Floor

This massive workshop is where the magic happens. The large room has 30-foot-high ceilings, and nearly every usable space is packed with complex machinery. Conveyor belts continuously pull items from place to place. Sparks fly, saws whirr, stampers slam. Each machine is covered in magical runes, creating a marvel of magical engineering. The machines work together in a dizzying sequence, capable of fashioning any kind of toy to the exact specifications of a well-behaved child.

The overwhelming cacophony here dulls out sound from the rest of the building. Unless an alarm has been raised, anyone in this room is unaware of the party's intrusion.

The machines have been altered. A successful Instinct Roll (10) determines that an alteration has occurred, but a successful Knowledge Roll (15) is required to determine exactly what's been changed: the toys are being created, but they're all cursed to be (metaphorical) ticking time bombs. Any child who receives a cursed toy suffers the Vulnerable condition unless they are perfectly well-behaved. The curse lasts for one year or

until otherwise removed. The curse has no effect on anyone older than an adolescent (but note that the period of adolescence varies for different Ancestries).

In the eastern corners of the room, near the entrance to the Sleigh Bay, are two security turrets. If an alarm has been raised, these turrets are already active when the characters arrive. If they are inactive, enemies attempt to activate them as soon as combat starts. These turrets have a Difficulty 10, Thresholds of 5/10, 3 HP, 2 Stress, Attack at +1 with an Automated Dart Gun | Close 1d6+1 phy, and operate autonomously to repel both the characters and Santa. They can be reprogrammed by a creature in melee range who makes a successful Knowledge Roll (16). Only temporarily so on a roll with Fear. Upon being successfully reprogrammed, the turrets can either be powered down or turned against the cultists.

Three charmed elves, two Krampus cultists, and two overseer automatons are in this room. Add as many charmed elves so that their total matches the number of player characters in the Party. If an alarm has been raised, they are in defensive positions and ready for the characters when they enter.



6. Sleigh Bay

Here, the famous sleigh dominates. The room itself, while well-decorated and warm, pales in comparison to the sleigh itself: a massive, fifteen-by-thirty-foot red-and-gold sleigh carved with the most beautiful and intricate designs ever created by hand. Carved snowflakes encircle gift boxes and reindeer, and carvings of hundreds of happy children, each face unique, are scattered over the sides. Worked into the aesthetic designs are several runes of levitation, a fact that can be uncovered with a successful Knowledge Roll (13). On a roll with Fear, the character notices runes have been altered to lock out anyone from flying the sleigh and it would take a Work on a Project Downtime move to fix them. These runes allow the sleigh to fly; the reindeer simply pull and steer the sleigh. Sleek golden metal supports wrap around the sleigh. The last twenty feet of the sleigh is filled by a massive bag made of heavy red velvet with a single opening near the driver's seat in front. This is Santa's bag—a gargantuan *bag of holding* capable of holding presents for all the world's children.

Nearby, a chute in the Workshop Floor feeds presents into the bag as they are completed. The south end of the room has massive double doors that open outwards into the North Pole, allowing reindeer to be hitched and the sleigh to take off.

Sitting in the sleigh, helping guide presents into the bag, is Drulyn Coalhardt, leader of the Krampus cult. He is dressed in Santa's coat, but thick black stains cover the traditional red in a cruel perversion of Santa's image. Unless something truly explosive has happened or the Workshop Floor's machinery has been shut down, Drulyn is unaware that Santa has returned until they come face to face. Two Krampus cultists are also here, assisting Drulyn.

Since the presents are not ready and the reindeer are not hitched, Drulyn is wise enough that his first instinct is to escape with what he can. Immediately upon sensing danger, Drulyn activates the sleigh's magic and begins to take off. For more information, see Part 3: Kringle vs. Krampus.

7. Factory Control

This complex control room gives instructions to the entire Workshop Floor. A mass of arcane control boards covered in runes and glyphs allow the Workshop Floor to be reconfigured in a dizzying variety of formations, allowing the construction of any kind of toy. The room is long, and the eastern wall is a single large pane of glass that overlooks the Workshop Floor.

The Workshop controls are vast and complicated but can be understood by a character who makes a successful Knowledge Roll (14). On a roll with Fear, success or failure, the Workshop controls are also protected by a rudimentary arcane trap that deals 2d6+2 magical damage to the first character who interacts with the controls. The trap is disarmed with a successful Finesse Roll (15) or Knowledge Roll (13). An element of cursed magic has been intertwined with the controls, making the controls foreign even to Santa—but if he aids in an action roll, it is made with Advantage. Once the controls are understood, the Workshop Floor may be shut off or reconfigured to make any kind of toy. However, until the curse upon the machinery is removed, anything it produces is cursed as described in the Workshop Floor section.

At the northern end of the room, enshrined in corrupted and cursed machinery, is Santa's *List*: a massive magical tome containing the name and status (naughty/nice) of every child in the world. It cannot be removed until the Workshop is shut down. If opened, it is obvious that the status of every child has been changed to "naughty."

Observing the Workshop Floor from here is Kiernon (they/them), an authoritative elf who is the second-in-command of the Krampus cult and the enchanter responsible for enthralling the charmed elves. Kiernon is formidable but defeating them cancels the mind control over all the charmed elves. If an alarm has been raised, Kiernon waits in Factory Control for the characters to arrive on the Workshop Floor, at which point they ambush the party. If no alarm has been raised, Kiernon crashes through the window onto the Workshop Floor, levitating above it (if attacked in Factory Control), or joins a battle in the Workshop Floor from the window after two rounds (if the party enters the Workshop Floor first).

Kiernon is wearing *Santa's gloves*.



* KIERNON

* OVERSEER
AUTOMATON

Part III: Kringle Vs. Krampus



HIS SECTION BEGINS WHEN THE CHARACTERS come face to face with Drulyn Coalhardt, who begins launching Santa's sleigh. Read or paraphrase the following:

The sleigh begins to rise up in the air, clumsily at first but steadying. Arcane glyphs glow along the sides of the sleigh and Drulyn grunts with exertion—with no reindeer to guide the sleigh, it is given direction by sheer will alone. As the sleigh rises, Drulyn—already beginning to sweat—calls out, "There's no saving Christmas this year! This year the children will get what they really deserve!"

The sleigh is flying away and soon exits the magical space of the North Pole to deliver cursed presents to the children of the world. Any character on the sleigh is brought along for the ride. For any character left behind, the reindeer return to serve as guides at Santa's call. Led by Rudolph, the reindeer move faster than the untethered sleigh and can easily bring the characters to it. Additionally, reindeer attempt to catch any party member who is thrown from the sleigh. The reindeer are intelligent animals who obey any order given by Santa or Santa's allies.

This encounter with Drulyn is a difficult one, compounded by his ability to transform into an Avatar of Krampus. Importantly, as the sleigh exits the North Pole, the Pole's special rules no longer apply—unlike the rest of this adventure, death is now a possibility.

The sleigh moves at a magical pace, seeming to be impossibly high and impossibly fast. While it is in motion, occupants other than Santa have no way of knowing where they are in relation to the world. The five runes of levitation, two on each side and one in the back, keep the sleigh flying indefinitely. A clever character can disrupt the runes by making a successful Knowledge Roll (16) check for each rune. On a success with Fear, the sleigh also drops in altitude, forcing anyone on board to make an Agility Reaction Roll (9) to avoid falling out; all five must be deactivated to stop the sleigh. Drulyn is immediately aware of a rune being tampered with, and acts to protect them. If all five are disrupted, the sleigh loses its ability to levitate and immediately begins to fall. It crashes to the ground at tremendous speed into an unpopulated area, creating a small crater and killing anyone aboard. Reindeer intercede to pick up Santa and any character unable to save themselves before crashing, but they pointedly do not save Drulyn.

THE DEATH OF SANTA

It is theoretically possible for Santa to die during this adventure. While this is obviously an outcome that should be avoided, Santa does have contingencies in place: whoever next puts on *Santa's coat* becomes the new Santa, with all of the knowledge and responsibility that comes with it. If the worst should happen, this might at least provide an interesting path forward for one of the characters! Santa Claus will not die without a few last words. He will warn the player characters that pushing back against Drulyn was only the beginning of the fight to save Christmas and will instruct one of them to wear the coat.

Once Drulyn is defeated, the sleigh stops moving immediately. As long as the runes of levitation are still intact, the sleigh stays stable in the air until Santa hitches a reindeer to the front to guide it back to the North Pole.

With Drulyn defeated, any remaining cultists surrender, and Santa regains his authority over the North Pole. The machines can be fixed by Santa and his elves to remove the curses from the toys. Christmas is saved once more!



Epilogue, and a new beginning

... or is it? The workshop has produced a lot of cursed toys that needs to be disposed of. In the meantime, production was massively delayed. More workshops around the world are going to be needed to complete all the gifts in time for Christmas eve.

If Drulyn was indeed defeated today, Krampus can always send someone else to finish the job! The North Pole is not safe yet from Krampus. He can still strike against the workshops, attack the children directly, employ more lackeys to prevent Christmas from even beginning.

And if Drulyn was able to take control of the North Pole, it's probably because Santa Claus has lost the trust and support of his dear Dierbin community. Drulyn was a manipulator, it's true, but if Dierbin's people really wanted Santa Claus to stay,

they could have rebelled against the sinister elf. But they didn't.

Santa Claus knows when his time has passed. He will turn to the player character, explain the situation and make his decision: he will take off Santa's coat and let whoever is worthy to put on the coat and become the new Santa.

After that, a simple, tired, but jolly old man will simply walk away from the North Pole, seeking peace in his retirement, leaving behind a life well lived!

You are Santa, now. Save Christmas!



* KRAMPUS

Appendix A: Stat Blocks

CHARMED ELF

TIER 1 STANDARD

A cute little workshop Elf that was charmed by the cult to side with them and make sure everything goes to plan. Not a great foe, but will try their best to stop you from the bottom of their heart!

Motives & Tactics: Patrol and carry on, sound the alarm when spotting intruders, incapacitate and detain.

Difficulty: 10 | **Thresholds:** 6/12 | **HP:** 4 | **Stress:** 2
ATK: +1 | **Short wooden sword:** Melee | 1d6+1 phy

Experiences: Hide and seek! +3

FEATURES

Gotcha! - Passive: When the Charmed Elf first acts in combat under alarm, they try to ambush. They begin with the *Hidden* condition, and starts by shooting at an exposed character with their Handmade Toy Crossbow feature. This one time, it deals +6 damage. Gotcha! can only trigger once per Charmed Elf and only if they have the *Hidden* condition.

Handmade Toy Crossbow - Action: Make an Attack against a target within Close range. On a success it deals 1d6+1 physical damage, and you may mark a Stress to add 1d4 physical damage on this attack.

Alarm! ALARM! - Action: Spend 1 Fear to try to sound the alarm if the alarm has never been successfully sounded beforehand. Any player character within Very Close range can make an **Agility Reaction Roll (13)**. On a success, they move in Melee range of the Charmed Elf and slap them to stop them sounding the alarm. On a failure:

- For the rest of this story, **Dierbin is under alarm**.
- **Gain 1 Fear** every time any Adversary hits a player character with an attack until the end of this scene.
- Add 3 new Charmed Elf to this fight.

The alarm can only be sounded once this story.

DRULYN COALHARDT

TIER 1 SOLO

The proud and charismatic elven leader of the Krampus Cult, successor of Santa Claus.

Motives & Tactics: Will do anything to achieve his plan and serve Krampus design.

Difficulty: 12 | **Thresholds:** 7/15 | **HP:** 7 | **Stress:** 5
ATK: +2 | **Krampus' Talon:** Very Close | 2d6+2 phy

Experiences: Creepy +3 - Krampus Champion +3

FEATURES

Relentless (2) - Passive: Drulyn can be spotlighted up to 2 times per GM turn. Spend Fear as usual to spotlight him.

Dark Aura - Passive: Attack Rolls against Drulyn within Very Close range have disadvantage.

Mage Armor - Reaction: When hit by an attack, Drulyn may mark a Stress to mark 1 less HP.

Spear Launch - Action: Drulyn can throw his Krampus' Talon on a target within Close Range, dealing 2d6+2 magical damage. The spear reappears in Drulyn's hand afterwards.

Belly Laugh - Action: Spend 1 Fear to exhales a blast of cold air. Everyone in front of Drulyn within Very Close range make a **Strength Reaction Roll (12)**. On a failure they take 3d6 magical damage and are temporarily *Restrained*. On a success they only take half the damage. Only once per GM turn.

Avatar of Krampus (Phase Change) - Reaction: When Drulyn marks his last HP, replace him with Avatar of Krampus and immediately activates him.

AVATAR OF KRAMPUS

TIER 1 SOLO

Drulyn has taken the face of Krampus, with gnarled horns and vicious teeth. "You've been NAUGHTY!"

Motives & Tactics: Kill the troublemakers, punish the children, change Christmas forever.

Difficulty: 10 | **Thresholds:** 9/17 | **HP:** 6 | **Stress:** 4
ATK: +4 | Krampus' Talon: Very Close | 2d6+2 phy

Experiences: Nightmarish +4 – Krampus Avatar +4

FEATURES

Relentless (3) – Passive: Avatar of Krampus can be spotlighted up to 3 times per GM turn. Spend Fear as usual to spotlight him.

Momentum – Passive: When Avatar of Krampus makes a successful attack against a PC, you gain a Fear.

Dark Aura – Passive: Attack Rolls against Avatar of Krampus within Very Close range have disadvantage.

Spear Launch – Action: Avatar of Krampus can throw his Krampus' Talon on a target within Close Range, dealing **2d6+2** magical damage. The spear reappears in the Avatar's hand afterwards.

Belly Laugh – Action: Spend 1 Fear to exhales a blast of cold air. Targets in front of Avatar of Krampus within Very Close range **make a Strength Reaction Roll (12)**. On a failure they take **3d6** magical damage and are temporarily *Restrained*. On a success they only take half the damage. Only once per GM turn.

Evil Laughter – Action: Spend 1 Fear to make Avatar of Krampus burst in evil laughter. Everyone in Close range **makes a Presence Reaction Roll (11)**. On failure, you become temporarily *Vulnerable* and **mark a Stress**. Only once per GM turn.

KIERNON

TIER 1 LEADER

Non-binary elf second in command of the cult, mastermind of the workshop takeover. Cruel and smart.

Motives & Tactics: Kill the troublemakers, punish the children, change Christmas forever.

Difficulty: 12 | **Thresholds:** 7/14 | **HP:** 8 | **Stress:** 5
ATK: +3 | Birch Whip: Very Close | 1d8+1 phy

Experiences: One step ahead +3

FEATURES

Relentless (2) – Passive: Kiernon can be spotlighted up to 2 times per GM turn. Spend Fear as usual to spotlight him.

Cruel Slash – Action: Make a weapon attack. On a hit, you may **mark a Stress** to add **1d6** damage to the weapon attack and either:

- make the target temporarily *Restrained* by striking at the legs, tripping the target.
- make the target temporarily *Bleed*. While *Bleeding*, the target must **mark a Stress** before any Action roll.

Get them! – Action: Spend 1 Fear to activate up to 3 Charmed Elves within Far range. If there are no Charmed Elf to activate in range, you can instead **spend 3 Fear** to make 3 Charmed Elves appear, temporarily *Hidden*, anywhere within Far range.

Shadow Jump – Action: **Mark a Stress** so that Kiernon melts in the floor they are standing on with a nasty cackle if it's a dark area. They reappear in another dark location within Far range. If Kiernon immediately attacks a PC from there, **gain 1 Fear**.

KRAMPUS CULTIST

TIER 1 RANGED

A Krampus Cult henchman that takes the Dierbin dress code very seriously.

Motives & Tactics: Flank, surround and neutralize.

Difficulty: 10 | **Thresholds:** 7/13 | **HP:** 3 | **Stress:** 2

ATK: +2 | **Dagger:** Melee | 1d6 phy

Experiences: Ritual +3

FEATURES

Krampus Punishment - Passive: When the Cultist hits with an attack, you may **mark a Stress** to add 1d6 physical damage to the attack.

Short bow Shot - Action: Make an attack within Far range if no PC is within Very Close range of the Cultist. It deals 1d8 physical damage.

Ritual of the Dark - Action: Mark a Stress to cast a stationary magical darkness that obscures everything around the Cultist within Very Close range, making the Cultist *Hidden* as long as they stay within.

OVERSEER AUTOMATON

TIER 1 BRUISER

A tall and sturdy construct, painted like a toy soldier, wielding a big candy cane and shouting pre-recorded voiced messages.

Motives & Tactics: Patrol like a good soldier, maintain order, bash the intruders.

Difficulty: 11 | **Thresholds:** 9/16 | **HP:** 5 | **Stress:** 3

ATK: +2 | **Giant Candy Cane:** Melee | 1d10 phy

Experiences: Patrolling guard +2

FEATURES

Sweet Payback - Reaction: When a PC attacks the Automaton within Melee range, **mark a Stress** to immediately make a weapon attack against them.

Missile-toe - Action: **Mark a Stress** to pick a target within Close range and shoot a small thunder missile there. Anyone within Very Close range of impact must **make a Strength Reaction Roll (11)**. On failure, they take 1d6 magical damage and roll their next Action roll with disadvantage, still electrocuted

Playing Santa Claus



SANTA CLAUS WILL TRY HIS BEST TO HELP THE PC during their investigations and fights but is not really capable of much without his coat and general garment. Losing his title to Drulyn has considerably reduced his authority and presence in Dierbin. But Santa is not completely defeated. He knows the ins and outs of the whole village, he will always be able to notice if something is out of place, making him the best guide throughout this adventure.

Not really the best of fighters, not that he's he known for that anyway, he will occasionally try to get in the fray to help a PC giving them advantage on certain actions, hype them up when they lose faith in their success and even occasionally punch a very naughty cultist. If you feel like the PCs need a hand in combat, you may make Santa do one of these:

- * Once this story, Santa rushes to a character after they've made a Death Move and chose to Avoid Death. Santa will make them drink one Potion of Health (Heal 1d4 HP).
- * Once this story, Santa will cast "Slay Bells", a spell that rings arcane Christmas bells and blast a thunder wave within Close range, targeting a group, and dealing them 2d8 magic damage.
- * Santa can occasionally punch an Adversary to finish them off, usually when the adversary is isolated, already hurt and inconsequential to the combat. Santa is never fighting in place of the player characters.
- * Once during the final fight against Drulyn Coalhardt, when a PC receives enough damage to make them mark their last HP, Santa interposes himself to save the PC and take the damage instead. If Santa does so, he is considered down and unconscious. Contrary to a PC who chooses to Avoid Death, Santa is still very much a valid target for adversaries, so make sure to communicate that to your players! Another nasty hit, and Santa Claus will definitely die. Santa can be saved from this unconscious state by any form of healing, but he won't stand back up to fight anymore.



Appendix B: Magic Items

Santa's Hat

With this hat, you are able to see how naughty or nice a visible creature within Close range is. Creatures can hide their own naughtiness with a Presence Reaction Roll (18).

Santa's Gloves

With these gloves, you can write at roughly six times your typical rate.

Santa's Coat

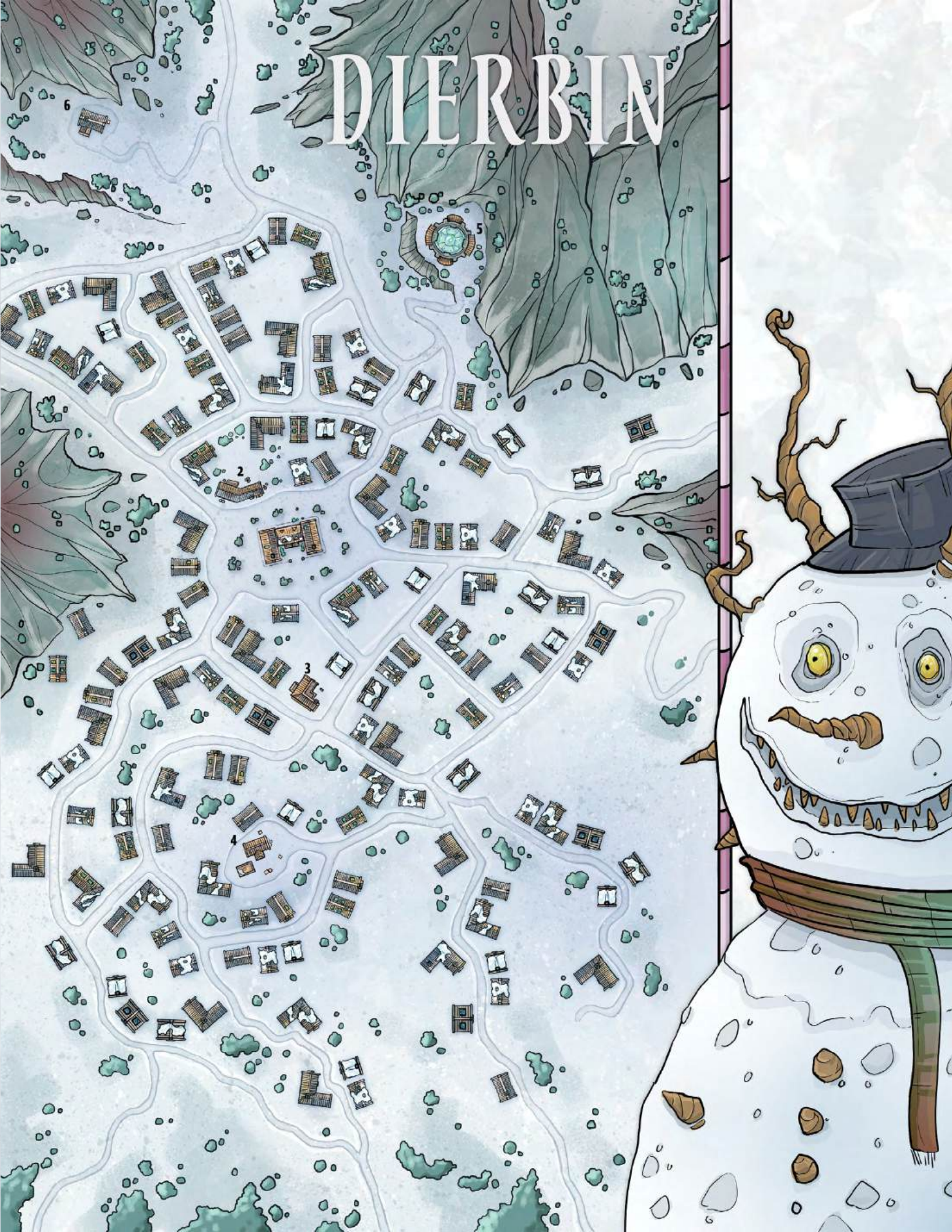
You can wear this coat on top of your armor. While wearing this coat, you slowly become Santa Claus. Over a few weeks (at the GM's discretion), you gain the following traits:

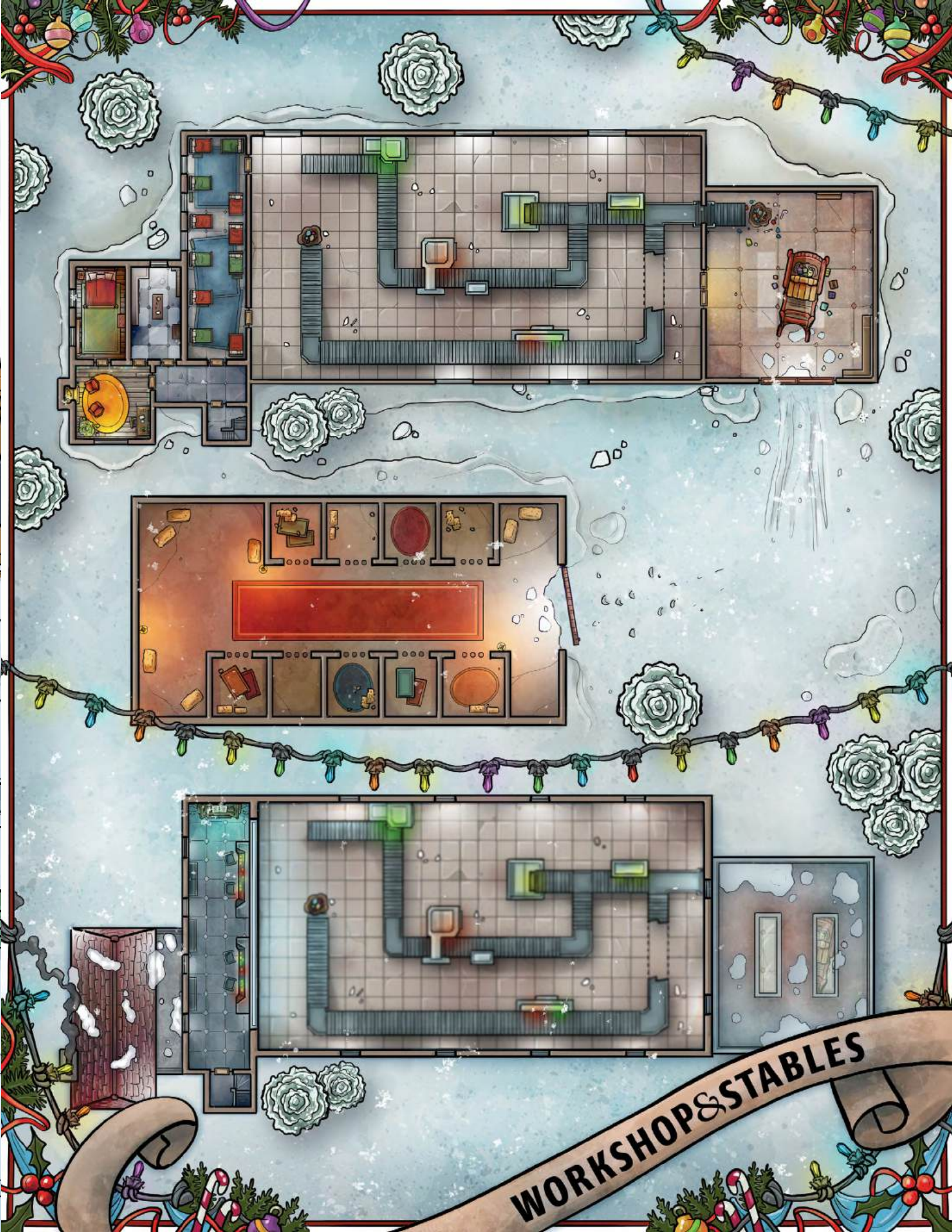
- * You grow a large white beard and a jolly belly
- * You gain the ability to know how nice or naughty any creature is at will
- * You gain the collected memories of previous Santas
- * You must deliver presents to children on Christmas

Additionally, you gain resistance to magic damage coming from cold threats. Once per rest, you may spend a Hope to exhale a cone of cold energy in front of you within Very Close range. All targets within the cone must make a Strength Reaction Roll (15). On a failure, they take d6 magic damage using your Proficiency, or half as much damage on a success.



DIERBIN





WORKSHOP & STABLES